

EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA
BRASILIA DF - BRASIL

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Brasilia DF, March 11, 1996

Mr. Marco Aurelio De Souza
Vereador - PT
Camara Municipal De Jacarei "Palacio Da Liberdade"
Sao Paulo - SP

C.c. : 1) President Camara Municipal de Jacarei - Sao Paulo
2) Governor of Sao Paulo

Dear Sir,

I would like to acknowledge that I have received your letter no. 058/01/96-CMV dated January 30, 1996 with the enclosed motion No. 2418 dated February 7, 1996 regarding the issue of East Timor.

In connection with these questions, let me clarify the matters as follows :

On April 25, 1974 the regime of President Tomas and Prime Minister Caetano was overthrown and the military took control of the Government of Portugal. Under the leadership of General Antonio de Spínola, the new government decreed the return of all civil rights to the people, declared its intention to hold elections and its determination to change Portuguese policy towards its colonies over seas. Concurrently with these new development in Portugal, the Governor and Military Commander of Portuguese Timor, Colonel Fernando Alves Aldea, in a statement on May 28, 1974 gave permission to the peoples of East Timor to set up political parties in order to decide their own political future through a referendum. After the fall of the Caetano regime and the permission from Colonel Aldea for setting up political parties, with the encouragement of the colonial authorities, five political parties emerged in the territory, namely : UDT, FRETILIN, APODITI, KOTA and TRABALHISTA. On November 14, 1974 the colonial Governor of the Territory, Fernando Alves Aldela was replaced by Colonel Mario Lemos Peres. So it is totally untrue, some ideas which state that Indonesia had occupied this territory since 1965. Indonesia even until August 1975 did not exist yet in East Timor.

At the same time, however, rumors of a Portuguese supported FRETILIN coup had spread widely, leading Portugal finally to deport two of its own army majors who had been leading the underground support for FRETILIN. Undeterred, however, on August 20, 1975, FRETILIN troops descended from surrounding hills and entered Dili. Lightly armed forces of the UDT, joined by APODETI and ultimately by KOTA and TRABALHISTA, were forced to battle FRETILIN troops armed with heavy mortars, machine guns and artillery. A civil war had broken out.

As fighting spread out, tens of thousands of East Timor residents fled across the border to Indonesian territory, placing an enormous burden on Indonesia. Yet the Portuguese Government made no serious attempt to end the bloodshed and political chaos in its territory. Instead, suddenly on August 26, 1975, the Governor and other Senior Portuguese Officials precipitously abandoned their posts in Dili, fleeing to the island of Atauro 20 miles outside Dili harbor.

Within a few weeks, they had abandoned even this outpost, leaving a total power vacuum in the colony that Portugal had ruled for 450 years. With no authority to check the widening bloodshed, FRETILIN expanded its reign of terror in the territory. Using the weapons that had been supplied by Portuguese from their arsenal, FRETILIN was able to continue its aggression for three more years.

As a matter of fact, Indonesia from the outset supported the efforts of the new government of Portugal to decolonize East Timor and time and again reaffirmed its readiness to cooperate with Portugal in the peaceful and orderly implementation of the process of decolonization.

In November 1975, three months after Portugal's irresponsible abandonment of East Timor, at a meeting between the Foreign Ministers of the two countries in Rome, Indonesia still urged Portugal to return to East Timor in order to complete the decolonization process in a just and orderly manner. Portugal, however, again failed to make good on its own promise.

Dear Sir,

It will be also important to recall that Indonesia had requested the United Nations to verify and monitor the situation, and had offered to create a four nation commission to restore order to the colony, consisting of Portugal, Australia, Indonesia and Malaysia, but these efforts again were rejected by Portugal. Thereafter, the minority group, aided and abetted by the former colonial authorities

started a reign of terror and plunged the territory into chaos and strife during August - November 1975.

In fact, they abandoned the Territory at the height of the civil war and compounded the strife and confusion by clandestinely turning over its arms and amunitions to the Fretilin. Without any semblance of authority left in East Timor, the civil war raged on, causing a massive influx of tens of thousands of refugees into Indonesian West Timor, thereby creating serious political, economic, social and security problems for Indonesia. Indonesia was not even involved at that time but had to bear the consequence of turmoil in the form of 40.000 East Timorese refugees fleeing across the border to the western half of the Timor island.

Indeed it was after the advent of all these events that Indonesia came to be slowly and inexorably dragged into the tragedy that was evolving in East Timor. Indonesia did only after a specific request by the representatives of the 4 major political parties that did not consider themselves bound to any decolonization covenant with the erstwhile colonial power since there was no administering authority representing the overwhelming majority of the people of East Timor and did not, acquire the territory by the use of force but specifically to restore the condition to peace and just process of decolonization. The exercise took place on 31 May 1976 when the duly elected People's Assembly of East Timor formally petitioned Indonesia for integration. The Indonesian Government on its part after complying with its constitutional provisions and legal norms, including the dispatch of a Parliamentary fact-finding mission to the Territory, accepted on 17 July 1976, the petition of the people of East Timor to become independent through integration with the Republic of Indonesia.

Indonesia's subsequent involvement in East Timor can, therefore, be seen as endeavoring to respond, in as restrained a manner as possible, to the chaotic and tragic circumstances that unfortunately accompanied the decolonization process in East Timor. Thus far from "disrupting the decolonization process" or from annexing, invading or illegally occupying" another independent state, as some have spuriously charged, Indonesia's involment in East Timor was, on the contrary, one of contributing to the process of decolonization in that territory, inter alia, by helping to ensure that democratically expressed will of the majority of the people not be overruled by the armed terror and unilateral imposition of a ruthless minority.

So, Mr. Souza if I may say on this East Timor question, it was not the people who expelled Portugal. Neither was it Indonesia that drove Portugal away from East Timor. The decision to leave was made by Portugal itself, abandoning the Timorese people in the depths of a civil war. Portugal itself, having felt the weight of its errors and intending to escape from its responsibilities, picked up its bags and sailed to wherever it found it possible to forever forget Timor. After 19 years during which the people of East Timor had chosen to reunite with its blood brothers and have lived in happiness and with pride, Portugal once again shows up through its Government, aiming to destroy all of more than 19 years of nurture in the bosom of the Indonesian nation.

We sincerely extend to Portugal the hand of harmony and wide-ranging friendship. It depends upon Portugal to be worthy of its prestigious name that it have earned in the voyages of discovery and recognize our sincere intentions and together with us march towards the future.

This mood of my Government requires, however, that the Portuguese side manifest its sincerity to the spirit of dialogue. We have never refused to dialogue and to come to an understanding with Portugal. Although at the time of the last voting on the East Timor issue at the U.N. General Assembly in 1982 Portugal was hardly in a position of strength on the issue, Indonesia agreed to the appeal made by the then-Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Javier Perez de Cueller, to start a dialogue with Portugal under his auspices. The purpose was to find a peaceful, comprehensive and internationally acceptable solution, under the general mandate of the Secretary-General, through dialogue rather than through continuing sterile debates in the General Assembly. This dialogue has been, on the whole, a constructive one as it contributed to removing any earlier misunderstandings and to resolving many outstanding humanitarian issues.

In short, it is Indonesia's view that any resumption of the dialogue should remain an effort of, and be personally led by, the Secretary-General of the United Nations or his designated deputy, and not become a mediation effort by third parties. It should also remain strictly tri-partite in nature.

We would like to further inform the distinguished Deputy that Seventh round of talks on the question of East Timor was held in London on January 16, 1996 between the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Portugal, Jaime Gama and Minister Ali

Alatas of Indonesia. Both countries have being hold said meetings under the auspices of UN Secretary General, Boutros-Boutros Ghali to find a comprehensive, just and internationally acceptabled ~~solution to the~~ question of East Timor. They have agreed to promote and preserve the cultural indentity of the East Timorese people and bilateral relations between Indonesia and Portugal. They have also agreed with the Secretary General's intention to facilitate and offer the necessary arrangement for another meeting to take place in Geneve on June 29, 1996.

The casualties that are claimed as a result of Indonesian ~~invasion~~, also absolutely is not true. Indeed, as a matter of fact there were so many maladies such as TBC, Malaria and other deseases afflicted the East Timorese refugees but it was as a result of the civil war.

Thanking you for your kind attention.



Your Sincerely

Djoko Santoso

Head of Information Department